

This is the second separate issue, the unnecessary, deliberate, unconscionable shutdown of the Federal Government with all the suffering and pain that that implies and that brings forth for Government employees, for private contractors, for private citizens in all walks of life that have been talked about on this floor today.

Mr. Speaker, we have had over the years many budget disagreements between the Congress and the President. Many times appropriations bills were not completed and signed into law on time. This year, because of the unnecessary delay because we wasted the first 100 days of the year on the Republicans' contract on America, and we did not start working on the appropriations bills until April instead of in January, the situation was worse than usual. But these disagreements, failure to pass the appropriations bills on time, do not normally lead to an extended shutdown of the Federal Government.

We are told by the Republicans that the President is responsible for the shutdown because he vetoed appropriations bills. Presidents Reagan and Bush vetoed appropriations bills. That did not cause extended shutdowns of the Federal Government. The normal method of avoiding a shutdown of the Federal Government is to pass a continuing resolution saying that every department of Government will continue operating on the same rate of funding as it did last year, or perhaps at 90 or 85 percent or whatever is agreed upon indefinitely while the negotiations on next year's budget proceed.

That is normally done. But the Republicans will not pass a continuing resolution, the normal method of keeping the Government in operation while the controversy over the new budget is determined. They will not pass it.

The only reason for the Government shutdown is that the Republicans, led by Speaker NEWT GINGRICH, decided months ago that they would use the threat or the reality of a Government shutdown to attempt to blackmail the President into going along with budgetary solutions that he does not approve. This is wrong.

Our Democratic system provides the proper means to work out policy and budget disagreements. The majority in Congress in both Houses passes a budget. The President signs it or he vetoes it, the various appropriations bills. Then there is an attempt to override. If they cannot override, they have further negotiations and eventually a compromise. If they cannot override the veto, if they cannot negotiate and come to a compromise, eventually they take it to the people. They say the President is unreasonable in his vetoes, let us get a new President; or the majority in Congress is unreasonable in its bills and let us get a new majority, and the American people make the ultimate decision. But while this is going on, the Government continues to operate on a continuing resolution.

This year, the Republicans say, no, we cannot pass a continuing resolution because we do not trust the President. He does not keep his word. Obviously, I do not believe this to be true, but even if it were true, it is not material to this. The Republicans say they must keep the Federal Government shut down until the President keeps his word and produces a 7-year balanced budget according to CBO figures. And if he will not do that, they will not open the Government. They will make us all suffer. They will make the American people suffer.

But the Federal Government is not a plaything or a possession of the President. The Federal Government does not belong to him. It belongs to the American people. Opening the Government is not a reward to the President for good conduct and closing it is not a punishment of the President for unacceptable conduct. Closing the Government, holding the people who need Government services, whether that be welfare checks or SSI or Medicare or passports, holding it closed is holding the American people hostage. It is not a legitimate negotiating tactic no matter what one thinks of the President's negotiating tactics. It is an abuse of power.

Let us keep the two issues separate. Let us vote on a continuing resolution to reopen the Federal Government, and then let us work out the differences on a permanent budget.

REPUBLICANS BELIEVE THEIR BUDGET TO BE PERFECT; WITHOUT ROOM FOR NEGOTIATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. HEFNER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Speaker, this has been a very interesting time for me, in the time I have been here, for all these years. First of all, if we buy the rhetoric from our friends in the Republican party, we have to assume that there should not be any negotiations on the budget; that the President should just sign the budget that they sent to him; that it is a perfect document, he cannot improve on it, it has all the cures for the ills that affect this country.

The President has real concerns, and so do the majority of the American people have concerns about the budget that the Republicans sent to the President of the United States, especially our senior citizens, our health delivery system, our hospitals, and I have just a whole list here from hospitals in North Carolina, veterans hospitals and private hospitals that say that this budget would be devastating to the delivery system to our senior citizens and to Medicare, not only in North Carolina but all across the country.

So we have to assume that the Republicans are saying that all we have to do, all the President has to do to put these people back to work is to sign their budget; that there is no room for

negotiations. There is no room for negotiations on the taxes, there is no room for negotiations on the cuts in Medicare and Medicaid.

Throughout history, Mr. Speaker, presidents have had the option to veto legislation, and then we try to work out the differences, but we do not shut down the Government and inconvenience millions of people.

There is one facility that is very, very special to me. There is a VA Hospital in my district, in Salisbury, NC, and when I went there over 40 years ago, one of the first places we went—I was in an entertainment group, and we went to this hospital and we entertained the veterans.

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And to this day, I go on a regular basis to entertain the veterans and to meet with them and to listen to their problems.

I want to tell my colleagues that our veterans' hospitals are in dire circumstances today, and I talked with a number of them today. Not only is their help getting frustrated; they are not being paid, and in one instance, a man who is used to getting \$500 to \$600 a week, he received \$141, and this is a man with a family. But it is beginning to trickle down to the care of these veterans in these hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, that is our brothers, our uncles, our parents. These are veterans that served in Korea and Vietnam and some as old as World War II, and through no fault of their own, they are being penalized by losing the services that our Federal employees provide to these veterans.

Mr. Speaker, it is just plain wrong for us to hold these Government employees hostage to debates that are going on at the White House down on Pennsylvania Avenue. There is absolutely no reason why we cannot put these people back to work. And, of course, one of the Presidential candidates says: No big deal. Who misses these Federal employees?

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you who misses them. Those senior citizens that want to file for their Social Security, they have become 62 or 65 and they want to file for their Social Security. They cannot do it. We have the people that work in the hospitals that are looking after these veterans, and some of them completely incapacitated, and those nurses' aides and nurses that are carrying around the bedpans, they either are not being paid or are being half paid.

But guess what? The people that are perpetrating this hoax on the American people, every one of them is getting a full paycheck the first of the month. We could even be voting here today on a measure that says we are going to give up some of our pay, but they will not even allow that.

So, it is not just Federal employees that are being inconvenienced; it is average hard-working American citizens that believe in Government, that have

paid their taxes, and they expect the services that the Government renders to them as citizens. This is not fair. There is no reason. I challenge anybody on the other side of the aisle to come and give me a valid reason why we cannot put the Federal employees back to work and continue the negotiations down at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Now, what I say today, is it worth inconveniencing millions of Americans to get at the President of the United States? Is it worth that to my colleagues? This is just plain wrong. It is not the American way. Let us put these people back to work and make America work like it is supposed to work, and work out our differences like we always have over the past years in honest negotiations on legitimate differences in philosophy.

IN SUPPORT OF EMERGENCY STATUS FOR FEDERAL WORKERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California [Ms. PELOSI] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, as this debate has proceeded, I have been listening to our colleagues on both sides of the aisle talk about who is responsible for the shutdown, and I will go into that in a moment. But in the course of the debate it was interesting to hear people refer to various symbols of patriotism in our country: the American flag, the eagle, Uncle Sam. Uncle Sam, he is a symbol of the Federal Government, but he has now become our dead-beat uncle, because across the country as we all sat down to our Christmas dinners and the start of a new year, many Federal workers were deprived of their pay, even those who were working.

Even further than that, many people who depend on the Federal Government to function not only now experience a tightening of the belt, but a closing down of their businesses, whether it is a sandwich shop near a Federal building or a tourist bed-and-breakfast near Yosemite National Park or some other national park throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, as we convene this second session of this Congress, we should all be ashamed of the disrespect with which Congress is treating hundreds of thousands of our valued Federal employees, public servants who want to work, many who are working now, and who perform important services for the people of our Nation.

Federal workers have been caught in the middle, against their will, held hostage to the machinations of the 104th Congress. This is a personal loss for many, and it is also a loss to the American taxpayer who has invested in Federal performance. It is time to end the Federal Government shutdown and to allow 260,000 Federal workers to return to their jobs. It is self-evident, I think, Mr. Speaker, that people who work should get paid for their work. Why should that be a mystery? Why is that even an issue here?

But do not take my word for it. I think it would be important to hear the voices of some Federal employees who yesterday rallied across the country. Their cry was: We will no longer be sacrificial lambs. Some of their individual stories are so definitive, so clear about why we should end this shutdown, that I want to share some of their words with you.

Pete, who files papers in the U.S. attorney's office, told the crowd of co-workers that she brought her two children to work yesterday because she could not afford child care after her paycheck stopped. Her children are at work with her as she changes diapers while she does work for the Federal Government.

Howard exclaimed, "If you do work, you should get paid. This is a type of 20th century slavery. We're responsible for our rent and board. Nobody else is going to be paying for it. We cannot file for unemployment," this particular group could not. "We cannot file for food stamps. What can we do?"

And finally, Eula said that she can now barely afford the gas money to get her from home to work. She has a commute between Antioch and Richmond, CA. Lajuana Brown had to cancel her 2-week Christmas vacation to work, and then had to ask her mother to take care of her children because she could not afford day care.

Mr. Speaker, the stories go on and on and on. In the course of the debate, our colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle have made various comments as to where the blame lay for this shutdown. It is interesting to hear them talk, because some of the comments seem to be contradictory, if the Parliamentarian would allow such a word.

First of all, they talk about if the President had not vetoed these bills. Thank God the President vetoed these totally unacceptable bills. They contend that they support a line-item veto, except not for this President. How inconsistent of them to argue about a President vetoing a bill, supporting a line-item veto, and not giving it to President Clinton.

Mr. HEFNER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. PELOSI. I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. HEFNER. Does my memory fail me? Did we not pass the line-item veto in the last session of Congress?

Ms. PELOSI. We did, in fact. It was one of the provisions of the contract, but not to apply to President Clinton.

Mr. HEFNER. That was not specified, that it would not apply to the President. They just have not given it to him yet.

Ms. PELOSI. They just have not given it to President Clinton, because of the delay.

They also talk about compassion. How many times have we heard our colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle say neither party has a monopoly on compassion? Well, I say to them, my Republican colleagues, that

compassion without a positive initiative for change and for action is an empty emotion.

Sure, we are all compassionate, but what does that mean unless it translates into action to meet the needs of America's families, and certainly not to send them to work without paying them?

They talk about the capital gains tax and say, "Oh, President Clinton says he will support a capital gains tax." President Clinton said he would be open to some capital gains tax, not the giveaway to the rich for any turnover of any asset that our Republican colleagues are advocating.

Last of all, because I do not have any more time, I want to say the other contradiction that I hear is that they say that Congress should obey the rules that other people do. If that is the case, then Congress should not be receiving a paycheck at a time when other Federal workers are not. I call upon the Republican leadership to bring legislation to the floor to effect that. It has been proposed by our Democratic colleagues. So much to say, so little time.

PAINTED INTO A CORNER BY GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GIBBONS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, here we are, American people, at the 4th day of January, 1996, almost 5 o'clock in the afternoon, and what are we doing? We are talking.

Mr. Speaker, in November a year ago the American people put the Republicans in charge of the U.S. Congress. They have a majority in the House and the Senate. They set the agenda. We cannot bring anything up unless they bring it up. They are meeting at 7 o'clock tonight to try figure out how to get themselves out of the predicament, how to get themselves out of corner that they painted themselves into in this ridiculous exercise.

One of the reasons I think the American people put the Republicans in charge is they thought that they could run this place like a business. Well, that turned out to be a joke. What business have we ever heard of that got mad, could not make a decision, sent its employees home and said, "Stay home, but I will pay you anyway, except the essential ones, you keep working but I am not going to pay you for the work that you have done"? I have never heard of an American business that is run that way; certainly not in my congressional district.

Mr. Speaker, then there is all this argument about the balanced budget. Well, I do not know anybody that is not for a balanced budget in this whole House of Representatives or in this whole Congress. The question is who is going to pay the cost of the balanced budget? Who is going to bear the burden of the balanced budget?